ABSTRACT

An electronic program guide (EPG) organizes and presents programming information to the viewer and allows for creation of queries to facilitate both simple and complex searches of the programming information. According to one aspect, the EPG is configured to automatically identify programs that a viewer is likely to prefer. The EPG collects viewing preferences of a viewer and, based upon the these viewing preferences, automatically develops queries for identifying programs that the viewer is likely to want to watch. The EPG further enables multiple viewers to merge their individual queries into one composite query or to run queries in background to periodically check for programs and notify the viewer when a program is identified. Queries are saved in an EPG database in a hierarchic structure with directories and sub-directories to make it easy for a viewer to organize and retrieve queries. Another aspect concerns creating queries for a channel, network name or program name using a 10-key keypad. The viewer enters digits in the number or name, one digit at a time. With each entry, the viewer might intend to enter a number or letter. The EPG is configured to interpret the data as representing all possible choices, including the number and letters associated with the key. For instance, when a viewer depresses the key with number "5," the EPG interprets that data to mean "5" or "j" or "k" or "l." The EPG identifies all programs, channels, and networks which begin with the number or letters. As the viewer continues to enter data, the list of programs, channel, and networks dynamically narrows so that after a few button presses, the viewer is presented with a short list of possible choices.